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## If You Do This Work

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## **If You Do This Work**

Read to Blues Backbeat by Steve Ray or BBK

If you do this work  
keep your bags packed  
you are seldom at home anywhere  
always a guest  
careful not to break the family dishes.

If you do this work  
expect to be hounded  
harped  
badgered and bullied  
by those who expect a unified vision  
which means their vision.

If you do this work  
you will not be busy  
because busy will not mean anything  
you will be living  
with a heart of steel  
and the soul of *do it, do it, do it*.

If you do this work  
expect to be a traitor  
to your race  
and all those things you promised  
but didn't know you promised  
when you were born.

You will be agitated  
but peaceful at the center of it  
you will be haunted by the historical now  
you will be given less  
than your colleagues  
by the institutions that say they support you.

If you do this work  
expect many will doubt your testimony  
judge your character  
insinuate you are an ego without restraint  
that you are a complainer  
that what you experience yourself  
and through others  
is a fantasy  
rather than life.

Expect to discover that imagining the  
lives of others IS real.

Expect the heavy hand of self-examination  
to judge you as the others judge

and worry about giving witness  
but sounding like you feel sorry for yourself.  
Expect your family to watch you  
the way horses watch  
with their eyes cocked to the side  
so you KNOW they wonder  
how to get you off their back  
and head for the barn.  
If you do this work  
you are a cross road  
a wreck, a radical  
not liberal or conservative  
you will not be invited to cheer  
at a tea or coffee  
(power is your friend and enemy)  
an artful dodger  
dancer and dance  
entranced by humanity  
and in love  
but aware that love  
is not enough.  
If you do this work,  
you will be tested  
by everyone you count on  
and they will be right to test you  
you will become a storyteller  
and the listener of stories  
with your whole body and being  
you will be on fire  
and hold a bucket of water yourself  
since others will be either too frightened or transfixed  
to save you.  
If you do this work  
your colleagues and work mates  
will assume you have a hidden agenda  
no matter how hard you try  
to either not have an agenda  
or to wear a sign with your **AGENDA**  
in big bright letters.  
You will be bold in spite of yourself and others.  
If you do this work,  
you better be part sky, part earth, part wind, part water, part fire  
and honor the seven directions.  
If you do this work  
know what the seven directions are.  
If you do this work

you will see things  
feel things  
be things  
you have not yet imagined  
and join a brotherhood and sisterhood  
that is always in the making  
that is flesh and bone  
and you will have lunch with Kachinas  
and dance with the delight of Hoo Doo  
and light up like a star-eyed hipster  
while the shoppers in the mall want sleep  
and to be content with nothing --  
you will never be content.  
If you do this work  
I warn you  
that it will be real  
work  
that your hands and heart will grow strong but scared  
that you will have to learn so many languages  
your tongue will knot up  
and you will see your body wear out  
with the rub and tug of agitation  
you will know the death of many things  
and the coming to life of many things  
and you will never be finished  
never done  
without security  
but with shelter  
when you ask for it  
and mainly you will recognize  
that for all the discomfort  
toil and wrestling  
the smacks to the soft soul  
the breaking of bones  
the stops and starts of the heart  
that whatever it costs  
it is the work  
and whatever else you might do  
is not work but killing time  
and time does not die  
and as my friend is fond of saying  
it is good work if it is worth it  
and this work is.

Rx